

COMMISSION MINUTES

May 29, 2013

A meeting of the City of Fitchburg Water / Wastewater Commission was held on May 29, 2013 at the JA Provincial Building, 1200 Rindge Rd, Fitchburg, MA.

The meeting commenced at 4:45 p.m.

Members present: Lenny Laakso, Commissioner DPW
Rick Healey
Ronald Lubianez
Michael McLaughlin

Members Absent: George Siener
Carol Brown

Others present: Denis Meunier, Deputy Commissioner Water
Joseph Jordan, Deputy Commissioner W.W.
Mary Jane Franklin, Clerk

ITEM # 1: Approval of last meetings minutes:

The minutes for the March 13, 2013 meeting were approved by unanimous vote.
(Please Note: the commission did not meet in April 2013 due to lack of a quorum.)

ITEM # 2: Public Forum:

No one from the public attended.

ITEM # 3: Water Division:

- **End of fiscal year review:**

Mr. Meunier reported that during FY 2013 two water mains have been replaced under the Kimball St Bridge and the River St Bridge with 12 inch main. A section of water main under Wallace Ave was also replaced in conjunction with the bridge project. The new section of main will allow for the abandonment (cut and capped in place) of a section of very old main that runs under the railroad track in this area. The water main on Almount Terrace, a cul-de-sac, with a history of discolored water, was replaced with approximately 220 ft. of 4 in. pipe and 300 ft. of 1 in. pipe. In addition, to the above capital projects, a loan order to replace 9,000 linear feet of water main during FY14 and 15, in conjunction with next sewer separation project, was approved and appropriated.

- **Review and recommend FY 2014 budget:**

Mr. Meunier noted that the Water Division currently has two open positions, created by retirements, he would like to see these positions filled in the next fiscal year. Filling these positions would allow the Water Department to do more work in house, such as water main

work, hydrant flushing, watershed maintenance, etc. rather than having the expense of contracting the work out.

The Commission discussed future capital needs and the need to, on an ongoing basis, fund water main replacement as an important part of the budget process.

It was noted that the FY 14 budget included as increase for reimbursement to the City in the amount of \$50,000. There was some discussion about the calculation of this expense, specifically regarding how the health insurance for retirees is being allocated.

A motion to recommend the FY14 budget was made by Mr. McLaughlin and seconded by Mr. Laakso. It was approved by unanimous vote.

ITEM # 4: Wastewater Division:

- **End of fiscal year review:**

Mr. Jordan reported \$2.5M in retained earnings, which is ahead of the amount projected, mostly as a result of the rate increase. Additionally, the payments on the 2 large consent decree loans won't start until next year because of principle forgiveness, resulting in only a small increase in debt service in FY14.

Several consent decree projects have been completed. A ground water interceptor on Jeffrey St. has been completed. This removed several thousand gallons of rain water that was previously going into the sanitary system and now drains into a separate storm drain. Three homeowners with sump pumps connected to the system were identified and a shared cost arrangement was made in conjunction with the project to remove and reconnect the sump pumps to the new drain system. A broken sewer main under the Nashua River has been repaired. CSS2B and CEPT have also been completed. The design for the next separation phase is finished with a bid opening on May 30, 2013. CSS3C will be completed in June.

Mr. Jordan reported a dramatic decrease in permit violations at the plant as a result of the ongoing improvements in both the collection system and the treatment plant.

- **Review and recommend FY 2014 budget:**

There will be an approximately \$3M increase in debt service in FY15 and FY16 as a result of the payments on new loans. For FY 14 short term debt will increase modestly. Starting in FY15, \$700,000- \$800,000 per year will be used from accumulated retained earnings to pay for the increased debt service. The Division will be retiring a number of small loans in the coming years and as that money becomes available it will be applied to the consent decree loans. As suggested, by the City Auditor, a new line item, reserved for debt services, has been added to the Wastewater budget to define the use of retained earnings. This money will be earmarked to pay off future debt only. Revenues will go down slightly due to shut down of the sludge incinerator. Personal services will increase due to contractual increases. Natural gas will go down substantially and electric was also reduced. Sodium hydroxide decreased and magnesium hydroxide and polymer increased. There will be an increase in

capital expense related to a supplemental environmental project required by the consent decree.

A motion to recommend the FY14 budget was made by Mr. Laakso and seconded by Dr. Lubianez. It was approved by unanimous vote.

- **Discussion: Town of Westminster's proposed use of the West Wastewater Treatment Facility:**

Mr. Jordan reported having a meeting with the Town of Westminster to discuss the possibility of the Town taking over the operation of the West Wastewater Treatment Plant to treat the Town's wastewater. They are doing due diligence and much more research needs to be done. A second meeting has been requested by Westminster at a future date.

OTHER BUSINESS:

The next meeting is scheduled for July 10, 2013 at 4:30 pm at the Water Office.

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 pm.

Minutes Prepared by: _____
Mary Jane Franklin
Senior Clerk